

## The Ways of the Army.

The young soldier, probably free of his home influences for the first time, finds his introduction to His Majesty's Forces far from pleasing or profitable. His life seems to be hemmed in with a hedge of "Don'ts" which are unusual, and, to the young man of action, far from understandable. Unfortunately, too many of these "Don'ts" always remain so, owing to lack of explanation, and in these times, when training is hurried, the opportunity to explain, for those who know, rarely occurs. The result is, therefore, that if the young soldier is healthy, he develops a "grouch." Just what his complaint is he does not know, but anyway, its "agin the Government." The hard fact will always remain, however, that although the Government is abusing his health by hiring men with stripes on to pull him out of bed with the crows, and subject him to other forms of brutality, such as physical training, yet he feels fit. Of course, that is his fault, not the Government's. Then, again, he doesn't get enough to eat, yet he is getting fatter. That's where he fools the Government. What's the use, however? Everybody is going through it in these days, but wait until we get home again." Wait until we meet that big Corporal, and we will "hand it to him." Quite right, we will, and we will ask him to "Drink up and have another." You think not? Well, wait and see. The whole secret lies in the fact that "he is one of ours, and was over there."

It is the same old tale, oft repeated. Every soldier has been through it, and has made the same dire threats, but when the day for casting his "Regimentals" comes, he does so with an inward sigh, and with an unreal outer joy. He may fool himself on that one day, but he will do a lot of thinking on the next and the next. Every soldier has denied this fact, and every soldier goes forth to demonstrate the truth of the statement.

Where is the attraction, then? The attraction is in the greatest asset in human life, real chums. They are the real attraction. Which ones? Everyone of them. The fellow who stole your soap; the man who sent you to whitewash the "last post"; the man who listened to your woes, and then told you his. They all are the attractions which draw you back to the barracks. What of the surroundings? No more bed boards; no more "mulligan"; no more P.T.; but instead, what? A soft bed to sleep in, which you don't enjoy, because you get into it too late, and leave it too early. No appetite for breakfast, and probably no time to eat it if you had. No sergt. to knock the grouch out of you inside three minutes, and so you carry it around all day. What about your liberty? Well, it is very nice to talk about, but the foreman or manager kicks like a steer because you were late. You don't mind that, because you would chuck the job if he got too fresh, but he probably fires you first, and spoils the show. You go around to the quick lunch to get your dinner. Fine dinner that, but why the deuce don't they get something fresh on the menu; they have had the same thing on for the least six months? What is wrong with it, anyway? Nothing. It is you that is wrong. You have not got the appetite, you don't feel as good, and it may be better than the Army, but it does not go as well.

No, we must give it up and admit that if we had a little more money and more leave to spend it, the Army would be first rate, but if we remodelled it to our tastes, we know we should spoil it. Of course, we do not tell the Sergeant-Major that, but we know it all the same.

What has this got to do with the unexplained "Don'ts"? It has everything to do with it, because they are the medical pellets which make the good things of the past seem dull and insipid when you go back.

The first thing you get when you join is an order to "Get your hair cut." That does not hurt; it is easier to wash your head, anyway. Then you are told to "Stand steady." That is not so easy to understand. You are not going to "stand steady" over there, you are going to kill Huns. Yes, but when whizz bangs are buzzing around, you find it easier to teach your shaky knees to "stand steady," if you have been taught to control your nerves on a parade ground. They are always fussing you about on parade for having dirty brass, etc., but you know that when you have got it all cleaned you stick your chest out and show it off. For the first few weeks you don't know how, but wait until you get down town. What does it mean? You begin to feel that it is no good cleaning brass unless you show it off. Your drill shows itself. You stick your head up, elevate your chin, swing your arms, and begin to feel like "the real thing." To sum it up, you take a pride in yourself. You do not appreciate it until the next recruit blows in, and then you see what he looks like. Do you tell him, how, what and when. Oh, no!!! You speedily tell him that he is a disgrace to the unit, etc., etc., and then you show him how it is done. Why do you do it? First, because you do not like the reflection of your former self. Secondly, because you appreciate your own improvement. Thirdly, because you feel a pride in your unit. It all comes unconsciously, and you do not see it grow until it is a healthy plant. It is the same with the whole daily routine. You get enough to eat, but you always feel fit for more, which would mean that you would not relish the next meal. Your meals are regulated, and you cannot abuse your health. You go to bed when you are told, and you get up better, because you had the right amount of sleep. You shake the grouch out of you before you are hardly awake, and then you take a pride in turning out on parade, determined to get off inspection without a check, first, because you have to, but later, because you like to. You feel proud when you succeed; proud of yourself, proud of your unit, and disgusted with the man who "spoiled the outfit." The men who made you what you are, cease to be enemies, and become friends. No? Well, why do you go to them for advice—because you know you do?

It is no use, you will not deceive those who know, and they are the only ones who will count "apres le guerre." You have learned several great lessons since you joined, and they are: How to take care of yourself; how to live on rational requirements; to control yourself; to respect authority; to make your life a part of the universe, and not a mere existence; you have learned of the world and its ways; you have realized that there are others beside yourself; that there are other places beside the little two by four area, which seemed to be the whole world; and over and above it all, you find yourself fit and healthy. You have confidence in yourself, and respect for others. You have brought out the best that is in you.

Will you acknowledge all this? No!!! Why? Because it is not the way of the Army; but all the same, you know it is true, and in your heart you respect those little "Don'ts" that taught you all this. Even if you do not get the explanations, you can at least judge the results. Will you stop grouching? Oh, dear no!!! Keep it up—it is part of your health. It is the safety valve that lets off the extra pressure.

It is no use being a flumbag, and saying you do not enjoy it, because you know it and feel it. Why, you